

In December of 2018, just 24 days after taking office, I announced the Ellicott City Safe and Sound Plan - a bold strategy to protect main street and surrounding areas.

This plan includes five storm water retention projects, two water conveyance projects, and a host of additional improvements and programs that enhance the safety of all residents, businesses, and visitors of our historic town. When complete, we will become the national model for flood mitigation and climate resiliency.

To date, we have completed:

- Two stormwater retention projects:
  - the H-7 pond – located at the interchange of Routes 29 and 40; and
  - the Quaker Mill Pond at the intersection of Rogers Avenue and Patapsco River Road.
  - Together, they have the capacity to collect and control the release of 7.5 million gallons of water during a storm.
- We installed high ground signage and access gates throughout Main Street. These promote safety and expand opportunities for quick evacuation during severe weather.
- We launched and activated our outdoor tone alert system. This provides critical early notice to residents when a flood is imminent.
- Finally, we established our comprehensive debris cleaning program to remove debris from waterways in and around Ellicott City. Since its launch, we have initiated 21 removal events and cleared nearly 80,000 pounds of debris from local stream channels.

Thanks to our team's continued effort, tenacity, and shared vision, we have set the stage to make 2024 a year of momentous progress.

**2024 State of Ellicott City**

Howard County Executive Calvin Ball

Thursday, January 18, 2024

After the devastating floods in 2011, 2016, and 2018, it became more apparent that a flood mitigation strategy that would save lives and preserve our historic town was long overdue.

Less than a month after announcing this plan, we acquired the first of ten properties along the south side of Main Street. Before Howard County owned any of the properties, the prior Administration had devised a plan to remove all 10 of these historic buildings.

My team immediately set course to reevaluate and improve upon this strategy. Our goal is to protect and preserve as much of our town as possible while advancing the most effective solutions to reduce and divert upland stormwater away from Main Street.

As a result, we dramatically scaled back the demolition of historic buildings from the proposed 10 to only four.

We are committed to preserving and renovating the six remaining structures and ultimately returning them to use. This includes the historic Caplan's building where we will begin construction of a new resilient façade in the year ahead.

These places are significant. They are monuments to our past, spaces in which memories were made. For many of us, they are fixtures of what Ellicott City once was.

While the loss of these four buildings is bittersweet, this work will help us ensure that Historic Ellicott City can and will prosper for another 250 years and beyond.

In Fall of 2023, we secured the necessary approvals to move forward with their deconstruction. This work, which you can see occurring behind me today, follows years of encouragement from business owners and residents alike.

Through this process, our team will salvage character defining elements like ironwork, cornices, granite, and selected doors and windows -- preserving them for future reuse. We will also recycle numerous other building materials, diverting them from the waste stream.

Once complete, our community will enjoy a new, vibrant outdoor space with views of the Tiber River in time for Summer of 2024. This is a critical first step toward realizing our vision for an expanded Tiber Park and the continued revitalization of Lower Main Street.

Our decision to protect more of our historic architecture is made possible by our bold, innovative approach to divert water from Main Street. The Extended North Tunnel, a concept that the prior Administration found too challenging, is a focal point of *our* EC Safe and Sound plan.

This transformational tunnel is a water conveyance project. It will carry flood waters roughly one mile from the West End of Ellicott City through an 18-foot-diameter underground tunnel to the Patapsco River.

It will move 26,000 gallons of water per second. This critical project will reduce the risk of flash flooding by intercepting water and diverting it underground and away from Main Street.

In the last year, we increased our capital on hand for this project by \$68 million.

This summer, we will break ground on this highly anticipated, *once-in-a-generation* project.

The construction of the Tunnel is expected to take approximately three years. Once complete, the Extended North Tunnel will be the single largest public works project that Howard County has ever undertaken.

Our progress over the last year has been a testament of partnership and cooperation. I want to personally thank the many people who have helped us meet the challenge.

Additionally, completing these critical projects requires collaboration from CSX Transportation, the owners and operators of the railroad track that runs across Lower Main Street.

Both the Extended North Tunnel and the Maryland Avenue Culvert projects will pass beneath the tracks and convey water to the Patapsco River.

During the last year, CSX has renewed their engagement and collaboration with our team. Together, we have pushed forward to achieve concept approval for both of these critical projects.

Since the adoption of EC Safe and Sound, our team has delivered two of the five planned stormwater retention ponds. The remaining three ponds combined will hold another 50 million gallons of water.

We will break ground on the next pond along Frederick Road just west of Route 29 in June and anticipate it will take about a year to complete.

Since the town's founding, Main Street has experienced the persistent, recurring effects of stormwater. The last three major floods of 2011, 2016 and 2018 are only the most recent examples with the threat of more frequent and intense storms looming.

When I took office in December of 2018, the County did not have control of any of the necessary property to construct our urgently-needed EC Safe and Sound Plan.

No design work had been initiated for any of the projects.

Today, we have acquired property interests in nearly all of the necessary land and *all* of the projects will be in some stage of design, construction or completed in 2024.

There is no question that historic Ellicott City is on the upswing thanks to the support of our community. Vacancy rates are down from 7.9% in 2015 to only 0.5% in 2023. The last two years have marked the lowest vacancy rates in *three decades*.

Last year alone, six new Main Street businesses opened their doors and became part of our dynamic Ellicott City community, and I was pleased to join several for their ribbon cuttings.

And beyond Main Street, we experienced even more progress.

Before the historic Courthouse held its last trial in 2020, we began imagining the reuse of this historic space. Through stakeholder engagement, we heard a desire for an additional public space, with cultural and civic activities and food-related uses.

This space will soon become the reimagined home for

- the Howard County Center for the Arts,
- a new Asian American and Pacific Islander Cultural Center,
- the Roving Radish program,
- a shared commercial kitchen and more.

This plan will retain the Historic Courthouse under County ownership. It will preserve the rich history of the building for public use and ensure continued parking for the community.

Programming offered by the Center for Arts, Culture, and History will activate the space and draw new visitors to Historic Ellicott City. This increase of foot traffic to main street will help support our small business community and generate new economic activity.

We expect to reopen the building for public use by fall of 2025.

Like our beloved Phoenix, Ellicott City will always rise again – through cooperation, partnership, and faith. 2023 was a banner year for our flood mitigation efforts and continued economic vitality.

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As I look ahead, I see a tomorrow that shines even brighter than the last 250 years. And I am so incredibly proud to be a part of *this* chapter of our town's story.

Thank you for your faith. Thank you for your endurance. And thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to making this the best place to live, work, play, grow and thrive for all.

Bless you and bless Ellicott City.